

Victoria Street Newz

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*"All the news that fits,
we print"*

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Two years ago shack dwelling residents of Cape Town's "Symphony Way" suburb were relocated to Blikkiesdorp (Block Town) - a "Temporary Relocation Area" according to World Cup 2010 organizers - as part of the beautification project leading up to the games. Blikkiesdorp has been described as a concentration camp with strict rules of curfew, no construction, and more.

This photo is reprinted with permission from www.garethkingdon.com

**Raise the
minimum
wage !!!!**

**... from \$8 to
\$17.31/hr !?**

From Community Council, Victoria: In 2010, the wage required to maintain an adequate quality of life in BC's Capital Region is calculated at \$17.31 per hour. This calculation assumes two adults working 35 per week each while providing a home for two children.

The Affordability Index, calculated and released each year by the Community Social Planning Council's Quality of Life CHALLENGE, reflects the real costs of living through the hourly wage required to enjoy an adequate quality of life in our region.

By any measure, BC has one of the highest poverty rates in the country.¹ With a very high cost of living (particularly housing costs), far too many British Columbians find it impossible to make ends meet.

"Many employers in this region are striving to find ways to help their staff keep up with the costs of living here. It is more and more difficult to increase wages to meet the costs of housing and daycare," says Rosalind Scott, CEO of the Better Business Bureau of Vancouver Island. "At the BBB, we are constantly exploring creative ways to reduce our employees' expenses - things like flexible work schedules and a medical emergency bank."

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About Street Newz

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Victoria Street Newz welcomes written submissions including personal stories, interviews, event reviews, cartoons, poetry, photographs, or artwork, but we can't guarantee everything will be published. We reserve the right to edit, and will not print anything libelous, racist, sexist, or homophobic. Letters sent to the editor are assumed to be for publication, must include phone number or email (if possible, for confirmation) and may be edited for length. You can publish using a pseudonym, or anonymously.

We are devoted to a triple bottom line philosophy - concerned about our environmental and social, as well as financial, well-being.

You can contribute to social change by supporting the Victoria Street Newz team, by pondering the root causes of poverty, and by working for peaceful, non-violent change.

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just another rant

janinebandcroft.blogspot.com

Late May and early June were a busy time for this media activist - I enjoyed a few days holiday in Tofino, and attended a national radio conference on Gabriola Island. Luckily I took my computer along on these adventures, and was able to keep up with and disseminate breaking news about our friend Kevin Neish who was aboard the Mavi Marmara when it was attacked by Israeli Defense Forces.

I sat alongside Kevin Neish, a longtime supporter of Cuba and the global movement for social justice, in mid June at a *Goods for Cuba* event. We were watching a Cuban documentary titled *People to People*. I thought about Kevin's recent near death experience as he and many other internationals were attempting to bring aid to the small besieged land of Gaza. The dominant corporate-stream media have presented the Palestinian story in much the same way they've presented the Cuban story over these past four decades - claiming the locals to be only a hostile people, led by an evil dictator, whose supporters must surely be hate-filled terrorists, aiding and abetting.

I participate in the 2008 and 2009 Friendship Caravans to Cuba, and last year I rode on a bus through the USA and Mexico, and travelled in Cuba, with Lisa Valenti - a Pittsburghian who originally planted the idea of aid caravans to Cuba in the mind of Lucius Walker, the central organizer of the annual Pastors for Peace mission. Lisa told us about the violence they had received from border officials as they tried to leave the USA with aid for Cuba. She had her shoulder dislocated and watched as Pastors were dragged through the gravel by their Spanish bibles yelling "Is this what we've come to, we can't even bring bibles to Cuba." Luckily, in those early years, a CNN cameraperson captured this action and shared it around the world, to the horror of humanitarian minded souls everywhere. Lisa told me her own family were sitting at home watching the news when her sister said "hey, isn't that Lisa?" and her elder mother replied "no it can't be, Lisa's with a nice church group."

Nowadays the corporate stream media seldom attend the historic annual USA/Mexico border crossings, nor do they much bother to cover the 15 or more caravan routes through the USA where over 100 tons of aid (mostly hospital supplies) is collected for delivery to Cuba each year. Through the decades, as word has leaked (thanks in large part to the many thousands of US citizens who challenge their government's travel ban and visit Cuba each year) that Cuba has zero homelessness, a higher literacy rate than the US and world class health care, many of us have learned the extent of the lies promulgated through the corporate stream media.

The Caravan to Gaza was met with similar, though much more sinister, resistance. Their unarmed ship was

boarded in international waters by armed men shooting randomly, their media streams were cut, and they were imprisoned and tortured (sleep deprivation, no bathrooms, handcuffs that cut into arms) in Israeli prison. Tens, if not hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of media equipment and personal effects were stolen, and likely later sold on the black market, in addition to perhaps millions of dollars of aid destined to help Palestinians attempting to survive a blockade that followed a 22 day military attack in the world's largest outdoor prison.

In the meantime, all eyes are on the Gulf of Oil and the ineradicable disaster that will eventually soil all ocean waters and innumerable shores.

I sat watching *People to People*, next to Kevin Neish, thinking about all this. I'd just returned from a weeklong community/campus radio conference where I'd met incredible radio folk from across Canada and learned that small rural radio stations are emerging across our nation. At workshops and around the campfire, we talked about the increasing need for alternative, non-commercial, community based information sources.

Essentially, it boils down to this. If you believe that the dominant social structures, the capitalist economic model, the corporate stream media are in need of small repairs but are otherwise working just fine, you're either not reading this or it'll be readily discarded. But if you believe that we all need, for the sake of ourselves and the planet, some fundamental structural changes to the ways we do business and interact with each other, then I invite you to get involved. Read the alternative media, listen to and support community/campus radio, pick a "cause" and find a like-minded group of people to work with. You don't have to put your life on the line attempting to cross an unfriendly border to bring aid to

people who need it, although you'd be welcome there if you're genuinely motivated. There's plenty else that needs to be done right here, and soon, before the Gulf of Oil and Economic Disaster hits your backyard (if it hasn't already).

This photo is one of the few smuggled out of Israel, after the aid workers' camera equipment was stolen. It shows an aid worker, aboard the Mavi Marmara, administering first aid to one of the Israeli soldiers who had boarded the ship illegally in international waters.



Adequate minimum wage

In the 2010 calculation, housing costs represent more than quarter of the total monthly costs. Child care, the second highest cost for a family with two children, represents more than one-fifth of the total monthly costs.

"As an employer, I need to be responsive to the needs of the workforce if I want to be successful in retaining staff," says Quenton Lehmann, Manager of Parks and Recreation with the District of Saanich. "The issue of childcare has risen as a primary concern for my team - both the cost of it and the shortage of spaces. We are looking at ways to meet the needs of families, like adjusting schedules around childcare needs, so that we can hold on to the staff we have."

Over the past four years, the wage needed for a family with both parents working has increased by more than 10%, from \$15.63 to \$17.31. There is some good news on the housing front this year. Though rental rates continue to rise, the overall rental housing stock has increased in most apartment

..... continued from cover ...

sizes and the vacancy rate has edged up slightly.

"The costs of living in this region are increasing at a rate that is seriously impacting our region's affordability. This has implications for all of us, as families, as workers and as employers," adds Brian Hill, Chair of the Quality of Life CHALLENGE and a Board member of the Community Social Planning Council. "The Affordability Index is an important tool to measure and understand the relationship between basic costs in this region and incomes and to explore opportunities to make our region more affordable for all types of families."

Research on the Affordability Index has been made possible by a generous grant from Coast Capital Savings Credit Union.

For more information contact Christina Peacock, 250-383-6166 x106; Christina@communitycouncil.ca.

¹. Statistics Canada 2006 - mhtml:mid://00000174/#_ftnref1

Ills and Pills

By *cyann ray*

I have a button that reads: *People use drugs because they work*. Yes. Some medications are quite effective and even save lives. But they are not without risks. Far too many people have died from pharmaceutical use and abuse to ignore the dangers of pill-popping.

Unlike alternative, holistic approaches, pharmaceutical companies have a profit-driven mandate. Chemistry keeners play around in corporate sponsored labs trying to create pills for every occasion and for every body. And the more they “succeed,” the more they can modify behaviours, stupefy attitudes and mask discomfort, the more money these drug manufacturers make. With the help of doctors and the media, all conditions (mental, physical, emotional, social, imagined or genuine) are labelled, diagnosed and considered “treatable.” Then out comes the prescription pad.

As the mother of an asthmatic who relied on ventalin treatments and various inhalers for almost a decade, I know the value of certain medications. But I also know that creating a healthy environment (ie: regular exercise, removing dairy products, cats, carpets, dust and smoke) can be just as effective.

I suspect that many “conditions” have been labelled as such so that pharmaceutical intervention can seem warranted. One of the most disturbing examples of this cart-before-the-horse mentality (where the drugs are invented then the condition must be created) effects children, a once over-looked demographic and untapped market. A generation or two ago accepted runny noses and temper tantrums as part of the childhood experience. Parents today, however, needn’t struggle with rambunctious children. It has become quite acceptable to label these kids with a “condition” and drug them. Show me a child with a runny nose and I’ll show you one who drinks too much milk or lives in a house with avoidable allergens. But why get rid of the cat when Junior can just pop a pill, dry up his nasal cavities and breathe freely?

Now THAT’S sick!!

There are lots of legitimate ailments that can effect a person’s well-being and it’s natural for us to seek relief in some form. But is the pharmaceutical approach always the best solution? I have my doubts, but it is the most readily available. From acupuncture to massage therapy, from a change in diet to herbal concoctions, there are many viable options beyond pill-popping. The problem is that our government prefers to be in business with drug distribution rather than supporting holistic or preventative measures. (More money to be made from the chronically ill). This attitude is creating an even bigger problem.

By preferring the pharmaceutical model of healthcare, our government is hindering the advancements of alternative care. Why doesn’t VIHA run a pay-what-you -can acupuncture clinic, provide free seminars on healthy lifestyle choices or support compassion clubs? Because pills are basically free and easy. Most prescriptions are covered by our insurance whereas most folks choosing holistic treatments must pay out of pocket.

Even more troubling, by mainstreaming and “normalizing” the pharmaceutical approach to healthcare, we are creating a new generation of druggies ... kids raised on over-the-counter meds and prescribed “goodies.” Do we know with certainty how these chemicals effect young, growing minds and bodies?

Perhaps a young man raised in such an era grows up seeking relief in the world of drugs. Perhaps he becomes addicted. Maybe his mind begins to cloud and fail him. Maybe he senses he needs help, needs to talk with professional counsellors. But talk therapy is time-consuming and costly. Much easier (and cheaper) to sedate troubled souls with meds than to labour over lengthy discussions. It’s easy to see how some would become discouraged and fall thru the cracks. And since our government decided long ago that mental problems are a low priority by closing all the hospitals and clinics that once housed and helped these unwell folks, many have been left to fend for themselves. And perhaps one sick, troubled man, unable to access the help he needs, kills an innocent young boy waiting for the bus.

Many of us are not “well,” but manage to carry on with our lives. It would certainly help everyone if we broadened our concept of healthcare and then made those options accessible and affordable. Tragedy will continue happening if those who need help cannot access the type of help they need. We must elect officials who are open to all forms of treatment and not simply drug-focused solutions. It’s time we looked beyond the prescription pad.

It was a Eureka! moment, or perhaps simply a serendipitous one. In the parking lot behind my apartment building, there are five recycling bins, of varying size and purpose. The big black bin is for all general landfill garbage, another equally big green one is for assorted paper and cardboard (not intended, of course, for pizza boxes with gobs of sauce and pepperoni still glued to the package), and a set of three sleek, smaller bins into which tenants may toss certain specified kinds of clean plastics and tin cans.

Each of the bins is (very) clearly labeled with a list of permissible items and, more importantly – in bold red upper-case print accompanied by diagrams with a “Don’t Do This” stroke through the symbol – what NOT to toss in. But guess what? Every time I lift the lid of one of those bins to launch my personal recyclables on their journey, I’m looking at a pile of “Don’t Do This” other tenants have discarded. It’s as if they first carefully read the list of forbidden items and selected one of each to toss. My perennial favourite is the collection of carefully washed yogurt containers (obviously the culprit, at this stage, was not completely unaware of the point of the exercise) placed inside a paper or soft plastic bag that has been sealed with a wire-reinforced twist tie before being thrown into the bin intended for (not soft) plastics or paper. Screwing up like that takes preparation and effort.

There’s metal in the plastics, and plastics in the paper, and paper in the plastics. Glass bottles end up wherever. Ditto for styrofoam: it turns up in every one of the bins at one time or another. This state of affairs always keeps me wondering if there really is non-stupid (human) life on earth. Then came my moment. While reading the Spring, 2010 issue of the UVic alumni magazine, *Torch*, I came across a brief article summarizing the recent work of environmental psychologist Robert Gifford. He has evidently gone to the trouble of uncovering and listing the psychological barriers (or “dragons,” as he calls them) that stand in the way of us doing the right things to prevent global warming and environmental degradation. All this by developing and administering a questionnaire.

Like any good social scientist worth his tenure, Gifford has organized the various dragons into categories. There is a sizable herd of them, over a dozen dragons in all, including limited cognition (like, duh, I don’t know what to do), ideology (think George Bush or Stephen Harper), social comparison (hey, everybody else does it this way), investments (but I always do it this way), mistrust (who says I can’t put all my plastics in this bin), and limited behavior (well, I sorted most of my garbage....). It’s a bedeviling piece of research.

Where Gifford ends up taking us to address complex problems like climate change (or sorting one’s recyclables) would result in a perverse form of modern-day marketing psychology or targeted advertising, just as Nike might use to convince some fourteen-year-old that she needs another pair of \$200 sneakers. Or Health Canada has been using to get us all to quit smoking (which hasn’t happened yet, despite decades of target practice). “To maximize adaptation and mitigation,” Gifford argues, “policies and practices must be designed and targeted precisely.” In other words, in elaborating what is wrong with us, Gifford would have politicians and policy makers merely sling a few pointed messages in the direction of the malfeasant parties to cause them to modify their behaviours – and hit the right bin.

But having identified so many dragons to explain human inaction or maladaptive behaviour, he leaves himself with an even bigger problem. His 13 dragons might just as easily have been six, 20, 35, or more. Such groupings are more or less arbitrary. That’s how social science works. It pretends to progress in this fashion: It groups, it categorises, it classifies. Then the next generation of Ph.Ds extends the effort to finding sub-groups, sub-categories and sub-classifications. Ever since Aristotle first began trying to sort out the world around him, humans have been sub-dividing nature – albeit, there was a slight gap in this undertaking during the medieval period. Social scientists, in their turn, have taken the tool to explaining human nature.

But does the (never-ending) pursuit of categories get us anywhere? I think not, at least not as far along the path to wisdom and wise action as we might like to believe. Categories create merely the illusion of understanding. And by chronicling “is,” not “ought,” they keep us mired in the present, thereby tacitly endorsing the status quo. At best they illustrate the tremendous effort, resources and time required to shift social behaviour even a few degrees on a single issue.

My point is not to disparage the (good) work of one professor but to suggest the overall futility of this line of pursuit. As social critic Neil Postman once put it, “social research never discovers anything. It only rediscovers what people once were told and need to be told again.” Even worse, this clunky, piecemeal, painfully incremental approach is totally inadequate for dealing with complex social and political issues that are holistic in nature. The reductionist approach used by Gifford, more common to the hard sciences like chemistry and physics, inevitably leads us into a long and narrowing box canyon. Once dead-ended there, the only helpful recourse is to retrace our steps into the sunlight where we once again can join hands and confront our demons. Or perhaps just look ourselves in the mirror.

So, what is the Eureka! to which I alluded in the opening paragraph? It’s like this: We overcomplicate things. Only so many dissertations can be wrung from human stupidity, one would hope. Doing the wrong things over and over again does not merit further study: It’s the human condition. It requires instead wisening up, a heretofore elusive goal of human civilisation. Ironically, we “know” more about human behaviour now (or think we do) – and more people are “better” educated – than at any other time in human history, yet we are blundering and bungling more colossally than ever before, with horrific consequences for us and everything we go near. Ever more data is one of the last things we need. Gifford’s dragons, in the end, are little more than an explication of why things are not about to improve anytime soon.

Submitted by *Brian Mason*, who lives in *James Bay*

Now I Get It

by *Brian Mason*

Clawbacks Not Cutbacks

from Gerry Masuda

In his 2001 budget, Gordon Campbell legislated the largest tax cut in Canadian history. It created a large budget deficit. The deficit was used to justify 'smaller governments' by drastic cut backs to government services and programs.

The cutbacks were so severe that budget surpluses soon arose. Rather than restore funds to government ministries so that service levels could be restored, the government gave the surpluses away as tax cuts to the richest individuals and corporations.

Even when budget surpluses were predicted, inadequate health care and education budgets were allocated. These inadequate budgets continue as witnessed by the numerous articles and letters in local papers on the pain of further cutbacks to schools.

As the economy continues to slow, more cutbacks can be expected.

Rather than cutbacks, the government could consider clawbacks - clawbacks of the too generous tax cuts given to the very richest individuals and corporations since 2001.

The federal government stated clawbacks with Old Age Pensions (OAP) from those in the higher tax brackets.

Rather than cutbacks, Gordon Campbell should clawback some of the over-generous tax cuts he has given the very richest in BC since 2001.

** New ** Supported Housing in Saanich & Victoria

If you're wondering what's happening at 3814 Carey Road in Saanich, it's the construction of the "Olympic Vista" apartments.



"Olympic Vista is Cool Aid's ninth supported housing building in the Capital Region and our first in Saanich, and will open early next year," said John Crean, Cool Aid's manager of housing. "With the addition of these 36 new studio apartments, Cool Aid will provide long-term housing and support services for a total of 292 people in Saanich, Victoria and Langford."

Victoria Cool Aid Society provides supported housing, primary health and dental care, emergency shelter, mental health support and employment opportunities to adults who are marginalized in Greater Victoria. For more information visit www.CoolAid.org or call 250-383-1977.

Also recently announced, the Victoria City Council approved more than \$600,000 in grants from the Victoria Housing Fund to assist the Greater Victoria Housing Society in creating two affordable housing projects in Victoria. \$370,000 was approved to develop 37 new rental units for low to moderate income families, seniors and single adults, while another \$250,000 will go toward creating 25 new rental units of low to middle income housing for single adults.

Rose for Governor !

Just a quick note as I would like to make a little contribution toward Rose's forthcoming trip to Chicago.

I'm hoping Rose will return and not decide to remain in Chicago and run for Governor of Illinois. As you may be aware, there was a grassroots draft movement a year or so ago to try to get Jesse Ventura to move from Minnesota and run for the Governorship of Illinois. A couple of polls indicated he would have a good chance of winning. But Ventura declined, saying: "It seems almost inevitable that practically every governor of Illinois eventually winds up in jail." Anyway, I hope Rose enjoys her sojourn in Chicago.

Gordon

editor's note: we're only \$390 from our fundraising goal see page 12 for info, and THANK YOU !



YIMBY

(YES IN MY BACKYARD)!

On May 31st 2009, one year after Victoria's only fixed-site needle exchange was forced to close, Harm Reduction Victoria organized an event to say "the needle and syringe distribution in the City of Victoria remains inadequate and violates international health guidelines on HIV/AIDS prevention."

A needle exchange is an important component of comprehensive harm reduction services. Harm reduction services are essential health care service. People's lives are at risk without access to these services. People who use illicit drugs have the same rights as any other citizen to safely access health care services when and where they need them. These rights are being violated."



What do you think?

Write to us at streetnewz@islandnet.com
or leave your words in our mailbox at 1027 Pandora.

About Basic Income

A basic income is an income unconditionally granted to all on an individual basis, without means test or work requirement. It is a form of minimum income guarantee that differs from those that now exist in various European countries in three important ways:

- * it is being paid to individuals rather than households;
- * it is paid irrespective of any income from other sources;
- * it is paid without requiring performance of any work or willingness to accept a job if offered.

Liberty and equality, efficiency and community, common ownership of the Earth and equal sharing in the benefits of technical progress, the flexibility of the labour market and the dignity of the poor, the fight against inhumane working conditions, against the desertification of the countryside and against interregional inequalities, the viability of cooperatives and the promotion of adult education, autonomy from bosses, husbands and bureaucrats, have all been invoked in its favour. But it is the inability to tackle unemployment with conventional means that has led in the last decade or so to the idea being taken seriously throughout Europe by a growing number of scholars and organizations.

Social policy and economic policy can no longer be conceived separately, and basic income is increasingly viewed as the only

viable way of reconciling two of their respective central objectives: poverty relief and full employment.

There is a wide variety of proposals around. They differ according to the amounts involved, the source of funding, the nature and size of the reductions in other transfers, and along many other dimensions. As far as short-term proposals are concerned, however, the current discussion is focusing increasingly on so-called partial basic income schemes which would not be full substitutes for present guaranteed income schemes but would provide a low - and slowly increasing - basis to which other incomes, including the remaining social security benefits and means-tested guaranteed income supplements, could be added.

Many prominent European social scientists have now come out in favour of basic income - among them two Nobel laureates in economics. In a few countries some major politicians, including from parties in government, are also beginning to stick their necks out in support of it. At the same time, the relevant literature - on the economic, ethical, political and legal aspects - is gradually expanding and those promoting the idea, or just interested in it, in various European countries and across the world have started organizing into an active network.

For more information, visit www.basicincome.org.

How to Destroy a Watershed

A lesson in the effects of deregulation

by Gerry Bill

They say water is the new oil - the likely cause of future wars, and some current wars as well. Everywhere in the world water is an issue one way or another -- even in rain-drenched parts of Canada.

I had the privilege of attending a two-day Canadian water conference at the end of May. Remembering the successful water conference we had held at Fresno City College in March, I thought it would be worth looking at the similarities and the differences.

The issues faced by the Canadians are not quite the same as ours. The water conference, titled "Your Water, Your Future," was held in Nanaimo on the east coast of Vancouver Island. I am used to Fresno, where we get just over ten inches of rain in a year; parts of Vancouver Island get 135 inches of rain per year. Sometimes Californians cast a longing eye on all that Canadian water, wondering how they might get some of it to relieve drought-stricken California. A word of warning California - the Canadians are not too happy about the idea of shipping their water southward because of the huge damage that would cause to the Canadian ecosystem. In a way, it is just a larger version of the fight in California over whether or not to ship Northern California water to Los Angeles, with all the environmental effects that has on the north.

Setting aside the issue of potential water exports, Canadians are already having serious problems of their own with the water even as they hang onto it. Don't think quantity - think quality. The problem for many Canadians is trying to keep their water clean enough to drink.

The conference agenda included a tour of the watershed for the drinking water of nearby Parksville. I was appalled. No one who went on the tour would ever again want to touch their lips to a glass of Parksville water - even after it has been treated with chlorine.

We toured the Parksville watershed by bus, which was quite easy because there are lots of streets and roads crisscrossing it. That's right, there are streets everywhere because people are building houses and are living right in the middle of the watershed. That means that whatever pesticides and fertilizers they use on their landscaping passes right through the soil and into the water which drains directly into the nearby shallow aquifer. Even more troubling, there is no sewer system so people's septic tanks leech into the same aquifer.

That is not the worst of it. As we drove across the watershed we saw some unbelievable sources of contamination. There is a cemetery next to a creek that flows toward the waterworks. There is a large pig farm with two huge piles of manure; the farm is about 100 feet from a ditch that drains toward the drinking-water pumps. I know, that makes no sense, but because there is no regulation, there is no one to say you can't do it. There are also three auto wreckers in the watershed, all leaking various types of fluid into the shallow aquifer. There is a former sand and gravel operation that has since been converted into a landfill dump, right down close to the waterworks; who knows what leeches into the groundwater from the dump. No zoning variances are needed for any of this activity because there are no significant zoning rules.



Here is the background to all of that. Based on an anti-regulatory philosophy, a conscious choice was made in Parksville that the area would have very little in the way of regulation. Both individuals and commercial interests can do just about whatever they want. Well, if you ever want to see what unregulated economic activity can lead to, come to Parksville.

The result is a mess. The drinking water is highly polluted. The organic pollutants can be neutralized, to a degree, by adding lots of chlorine to the water. That creates its own problems, because as the chlorine breaks down the organic matter, new toxic substances are formed. But chlorine does nothing to remove the battery acid, gasoline, antifreeze, and such that is coming from the auto wreckers - not to mention some heavy metals. From the landfill there are probably paints, cleaning agents and myriad other chemicals - a virtual witches brew of toxic substances.

The water is not treated to remove these other toxic substances, it is only treated with chlorine to take out the pathogens. As a result, people are starting to get sick, and for the most part they don't know why. There are cancer clusters developing - but, as per usual, it is hard to prove the cause of a cancer cluster. Sadly, even if they were able to prove that the water was the problem, there would be no one that could be held accountable. The cemetery, the pig farm, the auto wreckers, the landfill - none of them are violating any regulations, so technically none of them are doing anything wrong. The negative effects on the population are treated as unavoidable collateral damage. What a callous way to run a community.

Parksville is a particularly blatant example of mismanagement of a watershed, but it is not alone. The city of Nanaimo itself, where the conference was being held, has a compromised watershed. The watershed itself is not owned by the city, but is privately owned by logging interests - the biggest of them being Island Timberlands. The ownership has changed hands several times in recent years, passing from one logging company to another, but all with similar practices.

The timber companies are clear-cutting the watershed, causing all sorts of issues for the water. The soil is torn up by the logging operations and much of it washed downstream, which doesn't help the water quality at all. A bigger problem may be the toxic fertilizers they use as they replant the forest with the intent of harvesting the second-growth lumber as soon as possible. What will happen as these fertilizers make their way into the water draining from these clear-cut fields? No one knows yet, but it looks very much like a disaster waiting to happen.

Does any of this make any sense? Should watersheds for our drinking water really be in the hands of private interests who are out to make a short-term profit? It is a recipe for disaster, by any measure.

Water is our future-both in California and Canada. It is the most essential ingredient in life, and one which is being grossly mismanaged around the world. If we try to think ahead to the seventh generation, what kind of legacy are we leaving? We have not been paying enough attention. It is time for us to wake up and smell the water - with the hope that our future water supplies will not smell at all like the stuff we are drinking today.

Gerry Bill is Emeritus Professor of Sociology and American Studies at Fresno City College, and is on the boards of the Fresno Free College Foundation, Peace Fresno, and the Fresno Center for Nonviolence. He is co-chair of the Central California Criminal Justice Committee, and a long-time activist in Fresno.

photos from Ingmar Lee: top - Matsutake mushrooms grow only in ancient forests. It's estimated these two would sell for \$200 in Japan. left - the Nanaimo watershed, clearcut by logging giants Weyerheuser and MacMillan Bloedel in recent years.



Flotilla Fallout: Are Teams Right to Refuse to Play Israel?

by Dave Zirin

“[We are] saddened by the mixture of politics and sports.” So said a spokesperson for the Israeli Football Association in response to Monday’s news that the Turkish U-19 (under 19) soccer team canceled its match in Israel. Turkey’s team made the move following the Israeli Navy’s attack on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla that left at least 10 dead and scores injured. Then on Tuesday, the Swedish Football Association announced that it would formally request European soccer’s governing body to cancel Sweden’s U-21 game in Israel later this week.

The SFA said that they felt morally compelled to make the move following the flotilla attack and “the harsh responses to those events in Sweden and around the world.” SFA President Lars-Ake Lagrell said, “Like all human beings, we deplore violence and are shocked at what we saw ... It’s not pleasant to play in Israel at this juncture.” On Wednesday it appeared that the game would in fact go forward as planned, with Lagrell saying, “Since the United Nations has not decided on any sanctions against Israel we are obliged to go ahead with the match under [European football association] rules.”³

This certainly won’t be the last time we hear about countries, teams, or players holding up the flotilla killings as reason to ostracize Israel in the realm of international sport. The question, to pick up the ball from the Israeli Football Association, is whether it should “sadden” us to see politics and sports so brazenly intertwined? Should Israeli sport actually be safe space from how its government conducts itself? In my mind, the answer is a simple one: hell no. Israel committed an act of state terror on an aid ship in international waters whose passengers included an 85-year-old holocaust survivor, a Nobel Peace Prize winner, and hundreds of activists committed to delivering the most basic kinds of food and medicine to the Gaza Strip. It’s actually dangerous, in such a situation, to just “shut up and play” as if there is nothing to see behind the royal blue curtain.

International sport, to awkwardly paraphrase Carl von Clausewitz, is politics by other means. It’s used explicitly by all nations as a tool to demonstrate diplomatic goodwill. But in the context of such a visceral crime, international diplomacy morphs into little more than international propaganda and sporting Stratego. If a team refuses to play Israel because they don’t want to be party to the public relations objectives of a state engorged with violence, then that is nothing to be “saddened” about.

But this raises another question: if one supports the boycotting of Israeli teams, then where do we draw the line? Would we praise teams refusing to play the United States because of the civilian death tolls in Afghanistan and Iraq? What about rejecting China as an opponent because of their labor practices or treatment of the people of Tibet? Should teams refuse to play any countries directly involved in what they perceive as injustice? Once again, I will say hell yes. These particular games that pit country against country – whether in the Olympics, the World Cup or other avenues of international competition – are exercises in what George Orwell famously called “war minus the shooting.” In his essay, titled *The Sporting Spirit*, Orwell wrote, “I am always amazed when I hear people saying that sport creates goodwill between the nations, and that if only the common peoples of the world could meet one another at football or cricket, they would have no inclination to meet on the battlefield. Even if one didn’t know from concrete examples (the 1936 Olympic Games, for instance) that international sporting contests lead to orgies of hatred, one could deduce it from general principles.”⁴

This quote still holds the ring of truth but needs to be updated for the 21st century. Sports are still used at the service of nationalism. But in our globalized world of savage inequalities and dwindling resources, they are also used to present the poisonous relations between countries as somehow normal and even harmonious. And if it is business as usual between nations on the field of play, then surely everything must be A-OK when our heroes shower off the sweat and the cheering throngs wander home. But things are, as Marcellus Wallace said, “pretty f--king far from ok.” If a team wants to stand up and say “hell no” to business-as-usual in international sport, we shouldn’t ask why they are doing it. We should ask why more teams don’t.

Dave Zirin is the author of the forthcoming *Bad Sports: How Owners are Ruining the Games we Love* (Scribner). Receive his column every week by emailing dave@edgeofsports.com.

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A policeman stands guard while South Korean national soccer team players arrive at Johannesburg's O.R. Tambo airport.
REUTERS/Henry Romero

Israel’s Deadly Assault on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla: Murder on the High Seas

by Dave Lindorff

Like the cop who batters someone senseless at a demonstration and then accuses the victim of “banging his head against my baton,” Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has accused the victims of Israel’s brutal military assault on a peace convoy to Gaza of attacking Israeli soldiers. An Israeli deputy ambassador to the UN went further, saying, “What kind of peace activists use knives, clubs and other weapons to attack soldiers who board a ship in accordance with international law?”

Let’s straighten this out. The question to be asked is: what kind of country sends heavily armed troops to assault a boat filled with unarmed, peaceful civilians, and slaughters nine or more of them as if they were enemy troops in a war zone?

It is undisputed that the boarded ship, the Turkish Mavi Marmara, and five smaller vessels, were in international waters. According to witness reports, including those of respected mainstream journalists who were on board, naval commandos, acting on the highest authority from the Israeli government, but behaving more like Somali pirates, boarded the Turkish ship with guns blazing, and continued to fire even as the activists on board had raised a white flag. The boarding, according to Marjorie Cohn, former president of the National Lawyers Guild, and other legal authorities, was illegal under international maritime law, and in any event, given the fact that the ships were civilian, and the passengers non-military, even had they been in Israeli waters, could have been negotiated peacefully, had Israel wanted to do this.

There was no urgency. The Israeli Navy had the power to prevent the ships from landing without firing a shot. It admits it had nets that could have halted five of the vessels, and it has larger naval vessels that could have halted the Mavi Marmara, either by forcibly towing it, or by physically blocking its way.

NPR, in a particularly repulsive report on the bloody assault which killed 9 people and wounded many more, referred to it as a “bungled raid.” The New York Times, on Tuesday, in a news article, reported as fact, with no attribution, that “the operation seems to have gone badly wrong.” But this was no “bungled” action, or action that had “gone badly wrong.” The Israeli attack, and the deadly methods it employed, were both clearly deliberate, and had to have been intended to send a message to those who would assist the imprisoned population of Gaza, who for four years and through an Israeli invasion of that territory almost a year and a half ago, has been kept on a starvation diet by an illegal Israeli blockade.

Israel clearly wanted a violent confrontation, as it didn’t need to initiate one to stop the ships from delivering their cargo. The Israeli claim that the violence was justified because some on the boarded ship offered resistance to the IDF attackers, using metal pipes, is absurd. Israel has been fighting an unfair, uneven battle of tanks and Uzis against stone-throwing Palestinians for so long that it apparently no longer even recognizes that the rest of the world sees it for the homicidal bully that it is. Israeli special forces clearly have the training to disarm untrained attackers wielding pipes or even knives (my own 16-year-old, 130 lb., 5’7” son, with his karate training, could handle that).

And let’s be honest here. Israel is trying to have it both ways, and the two official explanations are mutually exclusive: On the one hand the government claims that the commandos were armed only with “paint-guns” and were “caught by surprise” by the boat’s “violent” passengers, but on the other hand, it also says it was convinced that the flotilla was organized by what it calls a “terrorist organization” with “links to Hamas and Hezzbollah.” If the latter is true, there’s no way the commandos were allowed to board the ship without assault weapons and other heavy arms. If Israel actually knew the flotilla had no “terrorist” connection, then a violent, armed assault and the use of lethal force was unnecessary.

continued on page 6....



Murder on the High Seas ... continued from page 5

The reality is that we are dealing with a pariah state, no better at this point in its respect for international law and basic human rights (where non-Israelis are concerned), than North Korea. And maybe worse. At least the North Koreans fired their weapon at a South Korean military vessel. The Israeli Defense Force attacked a vessel filled with civilian peace activists, including elderly Holocaust survivors and young children.

While the captured peace activists were held incommunicado in Israel on a military base that is closed to reporters, Israel gushed propaganda like a wild BP oil well, trying to make the case that the boats were carrying contraband (ball bearings and sling-shots in one account). Such ludicrous assertions, ultimately disproven, hardly justify Israeli actions in the assault. Moreover, the speed with which such alleged contraband was “found” on a ship carrying thousands of tons of relief supplies, suggests either disinformation, or that something was planted, either by the IDF boarding party, or by Mossad agents before the ships had even set sail.

This Israeli raid confirms the total bankruptcy of Israel’s position in the world. By killing Turkish nationals and by violating the rights of a Turkish vessel, Israel has permanently poisoned its relations with the only real ally it has had in the Muslim world--a country that only recently actually allowed Israel to use its airspace to attack a suspected nuclear reactor site in Syria. It has also done enormous damage to relations with the US, where public support for Israeli policy towards the Palestinians was already tanking, following the brutal invasion of Gaza last year.

American political leaders are still scurrying around trying to avoid alienating the powerful pro-Israeli lobby in the US, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). President Obama, the recent Nobel Peace Prize winner, when confronted with the assault, could only work himself up to the point of expressing “deep regret” at the loss of life, and calling for in investigation (by Israel!) into “all the facts and circumstances” of the incident. Such limp and even-handed comments are unacceptable, and are becoming increasingly out of touch with public sentiment. Even given the shamelessly pro-Israeli slant to most US media coverage of this and other Israeli actions, many Americans, including many American Jews, are finding it harder and harder to support Israeli policy.

On Memorial Day my wife and I had dinner at the home of a some close friends who are Jewish. Three other Jewish couples were also present, two of whom, frequent visitors to Israel, mentioned that they were planning a trip to the country this summer. During the whole evening, there was no mention at all of the Israeli raid. It was as if we were all at the zoo looking at the tiger exhibit, and everyone was talking about rabbits. The other three couples who were guests, none of whom were familiar to me, my politics, or even the fact that I am not Jewish, said nothing. Our friends said nothing. And I clearly knew that if I said anything at all, all hell would break out. Clearly though, all the Jewish Americans present realized that the attack would be an explosive issue even amongst themselves, about which there would be irreconcilable differences of opinion.

It needs to be mentioned that those helicopters that lowered the Israeli commandos onto the ship were American-built. Most of Israel’s formidable military is either made in USA or paid for by the USA. Indeed as attorney Cohn notes, Israel is the largest recipient of US military aid since WWII. If public support in the US for Israel continues to erode, pressures to end that kind of military support will mount. Already, many in the senior ranks of the US military are criticizing America’s unquestioning backing of Israeli military and foreign policy, saying that it is leading to the needless deaths of American soldiers. Americans, even many Jewish Americans, are becoming increasingly critical of the Jewish state.

The irredentist, apartheid religious state of Israel is heading down a dead-end road.

Originally published at www.thiscantbehappening.net, founded in 2004 as a blog by Dave Lindorff in a quixotic one-man effort to afflict the powerful.

Women In the Woods and Rick Jeffery

by Betty Krawczyk

WOMEN IN THE WOODS originated around my kitchen table in Victoria back in 1999.

I first met Rick Jeffery in 2003 during our blockade in the Walbran Valley on Vancouver Island when Jeffery was spokesperson for Hayes Logging. There was a series of meetings on the blockade line. I talk about these meetings in my recent book: OPEN LIVING CONFIDENTIAL: From Inside the Joint which resulted in a ten month prison stay (try the library or search schiverrhodespublishing.com for me).

Jeffery is now CEO for Coast Forest Products Association. And he thinks the HST will just be wonderful for corporate logging. Remember THE BAND and their recording of TAKE THE LOAD OFF FANNY AND PUT THE LOAD RIGHT ON ME? Well, the corporate world Jeffery represents is “Fanny” and we are the “me.” HST means the corporate logging world pays less tax now and we pay more. And the Corporate logging companies can continue to make stupid, uncaring mistakes in their methods of logging that have devastated the integrity of the public forests in this province with impunity.

Like the banks, corporate logging companies are considered too big to fail and will continue to get hand outs from government, especially the Gordon Campbell government, no matter how corrupt. This province has been riddled with corruption in the forests since Honest Bob Summers, as he was called, was jailed for accepting bribes in return for a huge Tree Farm License. Sommers was the first forestry minister of BC. He got five years. But the corporate logging company who bribed Sommers was not indicted and even got to keep the Tree Farm License they secured through bribe money.

And the corruption continues in the corporate logging world. We see this in the way the First Nations are swindled out of their land rights and how thoroughly the old growth trees have been wiped out. We see corruption in the dubious swaps that allow forestry giants to take what they claim is their private land out of Tree Farm Licenses. And they neglect to mention that the corporations were granted access to most of the old growth on Crown lands in return for the initial inclusion. Now that corporate logging has sucked up all of the valuable timber the corporate owners want to swap back again.

And the Campbell government agrees. The forests are gone but the ruined and clear cut land can now be sold for development. To Campbell’s rich friends. And corporate logging was granted these vast tree farm licenses in the first place on the condition they must have mills attached. That stipulation no longer applies. Workers jobs are now hitching a ride with the raw logs that are being increasingly shipped out. I believe that the corporate logging in BC is so corrupt that there is no hope for it either morally or financially. The logging corporations are imploding by their own greed and lack of care for the workers and lack of respect for First Nations. We need to nationalize our forests along with our water and banking systems. If we don’t our country will eventually be as denuded as Tahiti and as broke as Greece.

Great Grandmother Betty is out of jail, and writing at bettysearlyedition.blogspot.com.



The Advocate

by W. Robert Arnold

Very few people and corporations own the mass media. Deregulation has brought greater centralization of ownership into the media world. People like Rupert Murdoch, Ted Turner and Izzy Asper own shares in TV news channels, newspaper, radio stations and magazines and the corporations that own and run mass media. The problem with this situation is that competing views of the world and ideological positions do not get broadcast.

Owners dictate the editorial policies of the media they control. The owners are rich and know their interests and the interests of their friends can be best served by certain positions on issues. They are quite open about the fact that they dictate how their media outlets handle stories. As the status quo has led to these people being rich in the first place, they naturally have their media outlets support that status quo, unless the changes being contemplated would support their interest. Then they will help create the changes.

These owners are the “Media Barons” and are just like the “Robber Barons” of the industrial age who made fortunes in Transport, Industry, Resource Extraction and Media. Their attitude is that what is good for them and their corporations is good for the world. The perfect example of this kind of attitude is in the novel “Catch 22.” Milo says that if it is good for his corporation, it is good for America. That is the attitude of these greedy, power hungry puffy white men at the top of the pyramid.

There used to be two daily newspapers in Victoria. The morning paper was the *Colonist*. It was a conservative paper that supported the conservative governments and criticised the liberal left. In the afternoon the *Times* hit our doorsteps. This was the liberal/left paper that critiqued the actions of the Socred governments and offered an alternative view of the way things were and how they should be handled.

When both papers were bought by the same company, the *Times/Colonist* was created. Half the staff that worked on the original papers was fired and the editorial policy became that of the conservatives. This was done to save money, we were told. I think it was done to get rid of any alternative views unfriendly to the government and the interests of the rich people who run it.

Media outlets survive because of the advertizing they sell. The advertisers are corporations and companies selling goods and services to us, the consumers of media. These corporations are owned by rich people and investors. The corporations will not buy advertizing in papers that do not represent their interests. Therefore, the papers are even more likely to stick to the right wing, conservative point of view. They will lose money if they do not. No one wants to lose money, of course, but it robs the readers of any access to analysis of what is really going on or any opportunity to get other points of view out to the community.

If the consumers of media want to change this situation it may be possible. First it is necessary to analyze the news and share that analysis. Secondly, we can minimize the amount of monetary support we give the media by stopping the newspaper delivery and sharing one paper among many readers. When paper distribution declines advertisers are not as eager to buy space.

Electronic media are now doing better than papers because people are getting their news from TV, Radio and computers more than from papers.

Robert has fought poverty, his own and others, for over 45 years.



Kevin was aboard the Mavi Marmara when it was attacked by the IDF. This is a retrospective, a collection of emails Kevin sent as he prepared for his journey, along with some local media reports.



Kevin and friends at a Goods for Cuba fundraiser, shortly after his safe return.

Sat, 15 May 2010

Hello All,

Just a quick note to let friends, family and others know that I'm on my way to Gaza City, Palestine on one of eight Free Gaza Flotilla boats leaving various Mid-East ports on May 25th. Due to security concerns I only got a confirmation today that I was going. I expect to be flying out of Victoria around the 21st. The boats will be full of humanitarian aid and will try to break the illegal Israeli government blockade of Gaza.

Apparently the Israeli government has announced that it will use military force to stop the Free Gaza boats and their navy is now practicing attack/boarding maneuvers. I hold a rather old but valid marine engineers ticket, so I might end up working on my way over.

Once I arrive in Gaza the ship I'm sailing on will be donated to the Gaza Fishermen's Association and then I'll start working with the International Solidarity Movement (palsolidarity.org) as a human shield, protecting and assisting Palestinian workers in Rafah, repairing their water and sewer systems and such. I did similar ISM work in Bethlehem in 2002. There is no way of knowing if and when another Free Gaza ship will get back into Gaza City so I might be there for a couple of weeks or several months or more. I'll try to send out some email or phone reports but it may be difficult and I likely won't be able to respond to emails sent to this address.

If you want to know more about this project check out www.freegaza.org.

Take care everyone and I look forward to seeing and hearing from you whenever I get back.

Kevin Neish

Thu, May 20, 2010

I'd like to thank the dozens of people who have sent me emails and phone calls wishing me well. Many of you wanted me to keep you informed of what I'm doing which may be impossible from the ships or even inside Gaza. So here is a website (Freegaza.org) that the Free Gaza folks have passed on to me that will apparently help keep everyone informed of what is happening with the Flotilla of ships to Gaza. More than likely you folks

will be more up to date than I will be on my ship as the Israeli Navy jams all the communications coming from vessels they are pursuing.

I'm off tomorrow morning, but I still have no idea what ship I will be on or where I'm leaving from due to security concerns I suspect.

May 22, 2010

I just arrived at the Free Gaza apartment in Larnaca Cyprus and will be flying on to Crete tomorrow to hopefully join one of the Free Gaza boats. I'm told there will be far more than the original 600 passengers going to Gaza with more than 500 going from Turkey alone on a huge passenger ship. I'm told there will be easy email access for me in Gaza so hopefully I'll be sending regular reports. I'm told there is huge need for replacement ISM volunteers in Gaza as some volunteers have been waiting over a year to get out.

Got to some sleep so goodnight friends.

Mon, 24 May 2010

Thank you for all the support. It's been very good to get all your phone calls, unfortunately my neighbours in the hotel are not as pleased!! As such I'm not going to accept any calls late at night here at the hotel (between noon and 9PM your time).

If anyone is interested Chris Cook will be playing an interview he just did with me at 5 to 6 PM Monday night (tonight) on UVic radio's CFUV (101.9 FM). Sorry for the short notice but there was no way of knowing it was going to happen until my phone rang a while ago. If you miss it, it will be available on line at Chris' "Gorilla Radio" program site at pacificfreepress.com.

I've been busy getting training in how to defend our ship from Israeli pirates. We have to do this in a nonviolent restrained manner, so it's going to be a bit of a challenge but we can't give them any excuse to be violent with us, regardless of their actions. And now we are told that Israeli settlers are going to form a flotilla to attack us as well. It's going to be interesting.

In a past email I wrote that the Israelis were setting up a detention camp for us in Ashkelon but I should have wrote Ashdod. It better be a big camp as there are well over 700 Turkish peace activists on their

three ships let alone all the folks from 49 other nations on the other 6 ships. There will be a film crew from the Australian national TV channel and at least two other professional film makers that I know of and various print and radio media. We have also been getting training in our response to being detained and jailed in Israel and the expected deportations. We are all not going to cooperate with our illegal arrest and deportation so again it's going to be "interesting" how the Israelis deal with us all. When the Israeli navy illegally boarded and seized the last Free Gaza ship, beating several of the passengers, they towed it into an Israeli port and then charged all the passengers with "illegally entering Israel" and deported them all. It would be funny if it wasn't so sad and serious.

Thanks for all your support. You are all a long ways away but it feels good just to say hello.

Well as usual I've got to get some sleep.

Wed, May 26, 2010

My ship the Challenger II leaves tomorrow morning at 7am so this will be the last email until I get set up in Gaza. We should arrive at the Gaza water border mid day Friday (10 hours earlier for you folks).

At this late date I think it's fairly safe to let you know I've been tasked with defending a crew of journalists on the top deck of our cruiser. Since the Israeli military always tries to seize the media first to destroy evidence, my job is to non violently get in the way of the Israeli commandos in a narrow passageway for about 30 seconds so the journalists can up load their reports. It should be interesting to say the least. I guess all my young years spent playing rugby and football are going to come in handy, IE: being able take a hard hit and keep standing and not lose my temper, but this time there's no referees. I don't think the Israeli's are going to attack us as the bad press coming from this would be enormous, but everyone is ready for them. Retired US Army Col. Ann Wright is on our ship, so I can't imagine what the Israelis are going to do with her. There are also retired US ambassadors and European government officials and various VIPs on all the boats.

Well as usual I need my beauty sleep so goodnight for now. If the camera is on me I'll try to wave. Feel free to pass this around to any friends I might have missed on my "Gaza friends" email list.

1 June 2010 from BChannelNews.tv

Victoria resident Kevin Neish was one of 700 people manning an aid flotilla of boats which attempted to break the 3 year Israeli blockade of Gaza, when they were boarded in international waters by Israeli Defense Force commandos. Reports say nine to twenty people on the boats were killed and dozens were wounded. Here in Victoria people reacted in a demonstration of solidarity with the people on the boats in front of the Cenotaph at the Legislature Building.

2 Jun 2010 from Victoria Peace Coalition

As far as we know at present, Kevin is in Israeli custody and will be deported by the end of the week, according to Foreign Affairs on advice of the Israeli

government.

The returning flotilla volunteers will be able to give their accounts of the attack and we will press the media, in particular CBC, to correct any misinformation they have been broadcasting.

We need your help in monitoring the "story" that has been broadcast since the Israeli attack of the flotilla (recording news and interviews). Please contact us if you have evidence of unfair and biased reporting on the news or current affairs programs (dolcla@islandnet.com).

One outcome of this situation could be the partial or entire lifting of the blockade on Gaza. However, the attack itself constitutes an international incident that must be addressed.

5 June 2010 from PacificFreePress.com

Victoria's Neish Says 16 Killed, Executions on Mavi Marmara: Receives a Hero's Welcome at Home
by C. L. Cook

Recently released human rights worker, Kevin Neish told the press tonight 16 people were killed the night Israeli commandos attacked the Mavi Marmara off Gaza in the small hours of Monday. Until now, Israel and the western media have reported only 9 were killed.

Neish says he saw evidence of what he described as 'execution-style' wounds on some of the victims deposited in the medical emergency alcove near his assigned spot in the stern of the Marmara. He also said he had smuggled out photographic evidence of the wounds his dead colleagues received by removing the memory chip.

Acting as peace observers, essentially putting themselves between aid shipments destined for the besieged Gaza Strip, the hope is Israel would not dare harming the more than 700 internationals taking part in the six boat flotilla, and allow the foods, medical equipment, and building materials into the isolated enclave. Israel bombed the Gaza Strip for 22 days over Christmas 2008 and into January, and since has policed strictly a broad embargo against Gaza that was deemed by United Nations' rapporteur Richard Goldstone "collective punishment." That designation makes what Israel is doing in Gaza a crime under international law.



Slumdogs vs. Millionaires

by Justin Podur

The lecture hall slowly filled up as slides of families of the 200,000 farmers who committed suicide in India between 1997-2005 played on the flat screens on the side of the room. P Sainath, the day's speaker, was the journalist who brought the farmer suicides to wide attention. He opened his talk by updating information on that story: between 2004-2010, an Indian farmer committed suicide every 30 minutes.

The author of *Everybody Loves a Good Drought*, Sainath is in my opinion one of the world's best journalists. He describes himself as "the greatest reader of government documents, which is how I got a reputation as an expert on Indian fiction." Speaking at Toronto's York University on March 10, Sainath began by contrasting the trillions that were found for the economic bailout in 2008 and since with the constant budget cuts to social services and agricultural support, as well as the hundreds of billions in corporate taxes that go uncollected each year in India. The principle: "No deserving corporate shall ever go hungry."

Sainath estimated that \$12 million USD per hour will be received by Indian corporations in tax writeoffs this year, in corporate taxes, customs, and excise exemptions. Sainath got these from the publicly available Indian budget documents under an item called "statement of revenue foregone." The total writeoff? \$109 billion USD this year - not including subsidies, giveaways, lands granted and the special economic zones. That figure, \$109 billion, is 80% of the revenue that the government is entitled to.

Starved of the massive source of revenue, the government is raising taxes on petrol and diesel, both of which result in increased food prices at a moment when food inflation is 18% (the government figure) before the budget. A consequence of this inflation is that net per capita food availability on a daily basis has been falling for two decades. In contrast with what eminent nutritionist George W. Bush and the Wall Street Journal said during the food crisis two years ago, that India and China were "gobbling" the food supply ("like 2 billion turkeys", Sainath said) net per capita food availability (which is (total production - exports + imports - wastage + stocks)/population) has gone from 510g 7-8 years ago to 436g in the latest budget. The average Indian family is consuming 100-110kg less food in a year than before, while the top 10% of Indians are eating better than ever before.

What, then, Sainath asked, are the bottom 40% eating? He spends 270 days a year in rural areas and poor regions answering this question. And the answer is, they are eating less. It isn't because they are eating more meat or fruit, despite such claims by Indian economists. And redefining the number of calories that Indians need, from 2400 a day to 1800 per day, is also not going to do anything for peasants. The 1800/day figure is the one given by the FAO for light or sedentary labour. "Is the woman carry 35-40kg on her back for 20km doing light and sedentary labour? Is the coal miner riding his bicycle to and from the mine doing light and sedentary labour? Is the person working 12 hours in the field doing light and sedentary labour?"

Sainath then provided a caveat: all of the claims about India's progress, all of the India Shining successes, are true. They are true for a narrow segment of the population. The fastest growing sector in India is not IT, it's not software; it's inequality. India is a "Tiger," "we should ask why we name successful economies after an animal that is rapidly going extinct." India has always been unequal, but never before has inequality been so cynically created or so brutally enforced.

According to *Forbes* and the *Times of India*, India is the

4th on the planet in dollar billionaires, with 53 of them, after the US, Russia, and Germany. And India's billionaires are richer than Russia's or Germany's. 4 of the 10 richest men are Indians. One of the Ambani brothers, both of whom are on the billionaire list, is building a \$2 billion dollar home, building 26 floors, two helipads, and "an unquantifiable amount of resentment." The entire Daravi slum, the area featured in the film *Slumdog Millionaire*, could be rehabilitated with that sum. And the path of billionaires in India is different: whereas Russia's billionaires spend 10 years on the list, after which they go to prison, India's billionaires, as a democracy, head to Parliament after 10 years.

While climbing the ranking for number of dollar billionaires, India has been falling down the ranking for the UN's Human Development Index, now to 134th, from 120th before the neoliberal reforms of the 1990s. Sainath made the local connection - years ago when Canada was 1st on the Human Development Index, if the indigenous communities were analyzed separately, they would have ranked 63rd. India is behind every single Latin American country, behind Gabon, Botswana, and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. None of these countries have India's resources, wealth, growth rates (9% for a decade), nuclear power, software superpower - all handled poverty far better. There are hunger alarms in every single state in India, and some states, like Madhya Pradesh, have hunger rates comparable to any country in sub-Saharan Africa. The overall Indian average for child malnourishment is 46%, while the sub-Saharan African average is 35%.

India's billionaires outgun Scandinavia, Australia, and Japan. The billionaires control wealth that's equivalent to 1/3 of India's GDP, about \$341 billion in a \$1 trillion economy - in a country where 836 million Indians live on 50 cents a day. The World Bank says that \$1.25/day is poor, but India's definition is 24 cents/day, so that only 260 million Indians live in poverty by this definition. The billionaires are making some \$300,000-700,000 per minute.

One good program by the Indian government, one of its few achievements, is the rural employment guarantee, in which peasants can get \$1.50 - \$2 per day for 9 hours of work in the fields in 45 degrees celsius. "Rotating hunger" is a rural survival strategy. In a 6-8 member family, two members will eat on a given day. They work and earn the \$1.50, doing a job like digging 100 cubic feet in colonial-era style public works. People in their 60s and 70s are going to work in the program because it's the only way to eat.

Last July, India created the world's cheapest automobile (the Tata nano) while hosting the world's most expensive red gram (dhal, a kind of pulse which is a staple protein), reaching 100 rupee/kg. When pensions are 200 rupees per month, options like rotating hunger come into play.

Over a period when labor productivity increased by 84%, real wages fell by 22% and CEO salaries went through the ceiling. The face of poverty in India has an agrarian, a feudal, gender and a caste basis: 24% of India is poor but 35% of Dalits are poor and 42% of Adivasis ("this is what you would call here First Nations") are poor. Agriculture is the hardest hit and 65% of agricultural work is done by women. In 1990 agriculture took up 14.5% of the budget, while in 2006 it took up just 5.9%. Sainath told government officials that they might as well send the air force and bomb them, it would be a quicker death but no less certain.



Farmers in India today control nothing but the land. Pesticide, seed, fertilizer, water, electricity - are all controlled either by governments or corporations. The prices of inputs go up and farmers are forced into debt and encouraged to grow unstable cash crops, leading to increased risk, debt, and ultimately, suicide. In the 1990s they closed the rural banks, shifting credit to urban elites. Today agriculture is in the greatest crisis since the Green Revolution. 8 million have quit farming. Where did they go? "We don't know. We were too busy covering Paris Hilton."

How was all this done? Through the mechanisms of neoliberalism. A withdrawal of the state from anything serving the poor - the state remains interventionist and present in serving the rich. A transfer of wealth from the poor to the rich. The collapse of any restraints on profit and finance. The privatization of everything including the intellect and the soul ("What's a public intellectual?" Sainath asked. "One who hasn't been privatized yet.") And the growth of inequality.

What all this means is that "an unraveling has begun," and the economic unraveling that started in 2008 - didn't really start in 2008 and isn't over yet. But there are thousands of little struggles all over India, against what is happening. "Whatever you call it, neoliberalism, corporations, some of us with a more limited vocabulary just call it capitalism." But the struggles against it are going to take a very local character. The details will be different in different places, but what is important is to not let it pass in silence.

Sainath concluded by telling a story from Tacitus about a party by the Roman Emperor Nero, a party where the Roman elite came out and enjoyed food and music in an evening lit by people, "criminals," who Nero had set on fire. "I remember being struck by this story - not because of the cruelty, because the 20th century surpasses Nero, and we surpass Nero every day in this world - but because I asked myself, who were Nero's guests? How come they remained silent?"

After 8-10 years, Sainath said, I have my answer. You have the answer. Whatever we do, he said, your way or my way, let us not be Nero's guests.

Justin Podur is a writer and editor for ZNet (www.zmag.org), a media organization dedicated to political analysis and support for movements for social change. Justin lives in Toronto and blogs at www.killingtrain.com.

In the June edition of Street Newz we began looking at Jesse Ventura’s explosive new book, *American Conspiracies*, in which the former Minnesota governor says most Americans “Have had their heads buried in the sand” for decades while governments and the media have lied to them about important issues and while the military and big-money interests have effectively seized power in the country.

Last time we focused on three of the main issues Ventura discusses in the book: what really happened on 9/11, who really assassinated President John Kennedy and who really assassinated Senator Robert Kennedy. Let’s now look at three other controversial issues he discusses:

1. How the 2000 and 2004 Presidential Elections were Stolen and How the 2008 Election was Almost Stolen.

In a chapter aptly entitled, “Loser Take All,” Ventura describes in chilling detail how the 2000 and 2004 U.S. presidential elections were stolen for Republican George W. Bush through a wide variety of fraudulent means, particularly the “flipping” to Bush of hundreds of thousands of votes cast for his Democratic challengers on electronic voting-machines.

For Bush, Ventura notes, the road to the White House passed through Chattanooga, Tennessee – of all places – since the Republican Party’s electronic-voting “control centre” was based in that city at the head office of a company called SMARTech. It has now been well documented, Ventura says, that hundreds of thousands of votes cast for Democrat Al Gore in the “swing state” of Florida in 2000 and for Democrat John Kerry in the “swing state” of Ohio in 2004 were channeled from the electronic voting-machines of Diebold and other Republican-controlled companies to SMARTech in Chattanooga and “flipped” to Bush to tip the election to him.

Masterminding this operation were the Republicans’ Machiavelli-in-Chief Karl Rove and a brilliant but notoriously sleazy fellow named Michael Connell, who had gained the dubious distinction of being widely regarded as America’s foremost expert on the manipulation of voting-machines.

There is also good reason to believe, Ventura says, that Rove and company had developed elaborate plans to steal the 2008 presidential election as well but they apparently realized Barack Obama had built up such a huge lead that if they stole the election for John McCain, the fraud would be obvious to everyone and Rove wasn’t prepared to face the consequences. Ventura believes that had the 2008 election been so blatantly “flipped” to McCain, there would have been great public outrage and perhaps even rioting in the streets across America.

In one of the most bizarre strokes of irony in this sordid saga, Michael Connell, the master manipulator of electronic voting, was eventually trapped by investigators in Ohio in 2008 but, just as he was about to try to cut a deal with the authorities and blow the whistle on the vote-rigging operations, he was killed in a mysterious “accident” when the small plane he was flying crashed for no obvious reason. The 45 year-old Connell was in good health and was an experienced pilot flying in clear weather.

Though nothing has ever been proven, Ventura says it is widely believed that someone who wanted to silence Connell caused the “accident” by disrupting the plane’s electronic control system using what is known as “electro-magnetic pulse technology.” So it appears that he who lives by electronic sabotage sometimes also dies by electronic sabotage!

In any case, as Ventura notes, the horrific experience with electronic voting in recent American elections provides a very important lesson not only for the U.S. but for Canada and other countries as well: use paper ballots, not electronic voting-machines.

Here in British Columbia, Harry Neufeld and his excellent staff at Elections BC provide this province with one of the most efficient and most scrupulously honest and non-partisan voting systems that can be found anywhere in the world – using traditional paper ballots. The last thing we need in B.C. is any form of electronic voting. Indeed, if you should ever happen to

Fascinating Insights from a Thinking American

by Gordon Pollard

come across any electronic voting-machines, you might consider doing democracy a big favour and smash them to smithereens with a sledgehammer.

2. How a Cabal of U.S. Business Tycoons Tried to Overthrow the President and Set Up a Fascist Government in the U.S. in 1934.

Have you ever heard about the plot by a number of U.S. business titans to depose President Franklin Roosevelt in 1934 and establish a fascist regime in the U.S.? And have you ever heard of General Smedley Butler, the man who foiled this attempted coup? Probably not, says Jesse Ventura, since “respectable” mainstream politicians, historians, journalists and educators have done everything possible to sweep this ugly chapter of American history under the rug.

Ventura believes, however, it is important for everyone to take a long, sobering look at what happened 76 years ago. It is especially important at this time when the military and the big banks and corporations have gained such a stranglehold on the American power structure that the political atmosphere in the U.S. once again reeks with the stench of neo-fascism.

When Franklin Roosevelt became president in 1933, he began a “new Deal” program that helped the poor but imposed higher taxes on the rich. This infuriated many of the kingpins of Wall Street and some of them (including the Rockefellers, Mellons and Duponts) soon began hatching a plot to overthrow Roosevelt and set up a far-right fascist-type government. Among these conspirators, Ventura notes, was “none other than Prescott Bush, grandfather of George W. and father of George H.W., who also happened to be a business partner and American banker for a German steel and coal baron who funded Adolph Hitler’s rise to power.”

These conspirators secretly approached the popular, charismatic General Smedley Butler, believing he would be the ideal “front man” for their scheme. But, to their amazement, Butler not only refused to go along with their plans but went before a congressional committee and blew the whistle on the plot. When they were caught red-handed, the plotters and their allies in the corporate media denied there was any plan to topple Roosevelt. But the congressional committee didn’t buy these denials and carried out a two-month investigation. The committee concluded that “General Butler’s story of a fascist march on Washington was alarmingly true.”

Veteran politician John McCormack, who co-chaired that committee, said later: “If the plotters had got rid of Roosevelt, there’s no telling what might have taken place The people were in a very confused state of mind, making the nation weak and ripe for some drastic kind of extremist reaction.” However, because these business barons were so powerful, President Roosevelt decided not to prosecute them, fearing that might trigger a political and social upheaval. Though the attempted coup was one of the most shocking incidents in American history, today both the plot and Smedley Butler’s magnificent defence of the democratic process are almost totally forgotten.

“It’s really incredible,” says Ventura. “Had it not been for the courage and integrity of Smedley Butler, we might well have been living in a country not far removed from Hitler’s Germany or Mussolini’s Italy. Surely a planned coup to overthrow our government and turn us into a fascist state ought to make it into our history books, so we can learn from it and hopefully never repeat it. But, in fact, you won’t find anything about this incident in the school curriculum anywhere in the country.”

For further information on this topic, Ventura refers readers to the brilliant expose, *The Plot to Seize the White House*, by investigative journalist Jules Archer.

3. How the U.S. Government Publicly Wages a “War on Drugs” But Secretly Engages in Global Drug Trafficking.

Ventura says the story of the U.S. government and drug dealing is one of mind-boggling hypocrisy and insatiable greed. He describes in great detail how the American

(Second of Two Parts)

government, while sanctimoniously claiming to be waging a noble “war on drugs,” has actually for decades been one of the world’s leading drug traffickers.

“At the same time Nancy Reagan was telling our kids to ‘just say ‘no’ to drugs,’” Ventura notes, “America’s backing of the Nicaraguan Contra movement was being funded mainly by cocaine traffickers and money launderers. A report by the CIA’s own Inspector General confirmed this is 1998 The drug trade had also been part and parcel of our involvement in the Vietnam War, just as it is today in Afghanistan. The CIA’s secret missions are all financed with drug money because then they don’t have to account for it.”

Ventura points out that at the height of the Vietnam War drug trafficking was so widespread that “heroin was even being smuggled into the U.S. in the coffins of dead soldiers being flown home – coded ahead of time so they could be identified upon arrival and the drugs removed.”

Big business, Ventura notes, is doing very nicely, thank you, from the illicit drug trade. “Between 1970 and 2007,” he says, “we saw a 547 per cent increase in our prison population, mainly because of our drug policies. Of course, that’s just fine with our new prison-industrial complex where corporations are now running the show. U.S. taxpayers shell out \$68 billion every year for prisons, and a lot of that ends up going into private contractors’ pockets.”

“It is high time,” Ventura says, “to recognize that the so-called ‘war on drugs’ has been a complete failure. It is killing and imprisoning our citizens way out of proportion to how it’s helping anyone.”

As for what should now be done, he says: “A good first step toward truly dealing with our ‘drug problem’ would be legalizing marijuana and putting a tax on its purchase as is done with cigarettes and alcohol.”

For more information on this topic, Ventura refers readers to two books: *Dark Alliance: The CIA, the Contras and the Crack Cocaine Explosion* by Gary Webb and *Drugs, Oil and War: The United States in Afghanistan, Colombia and Indochina* by Peter Dale Scott.

In this book Ventura discusses a number of other important topics in addition to the six we have looked at in our Street Newz articles. For example, he provides new information and insights about the assassinations of Abraham Lincoln in 1865, Malcolm X in 1965 and Dr. Martin Luther King in 1968.

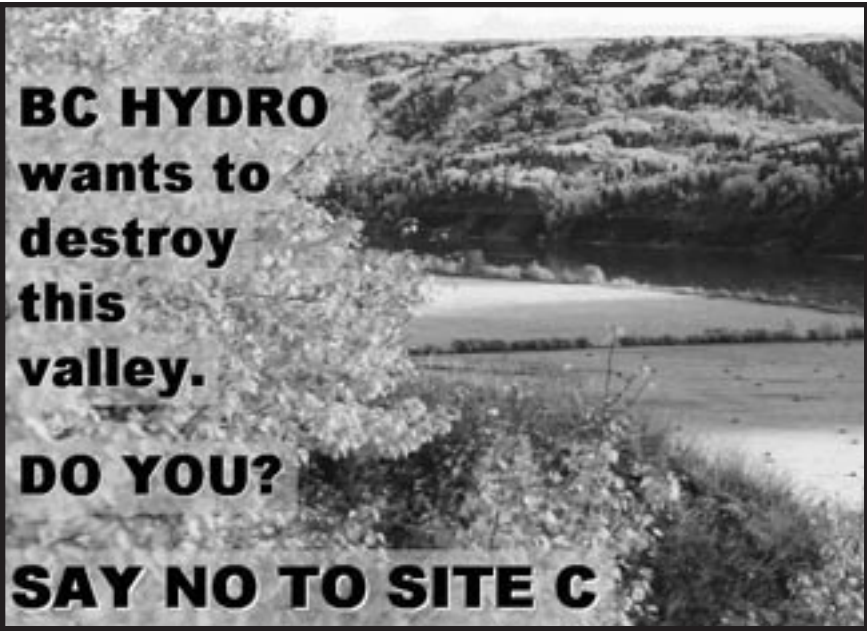
Ventura also discusses “the Wall Street conspiracy,” saying: “The government has conspired to keep the ‘fat cats’ in business while American taxpayers are left holding the bag. CEOs who should be going to jail for scams beyond belief are instead reaping their biggest bonuses ever. Corporations basically run the government, and the same players who made the mess still have a stranglehold on our future.”

Explaining why he wrote this book, Ventura says: “After I’m long gone, I believe there needs to be a record that some people thought things other than just the status quo of what the government has put out for us all to believe. I think it’s a duty we have to humanity.”

As for whether he has any further political ambitions, Ventura remains non-committal. But he continues to have a huge following that extends far beyond the borders of Minnesota and his name has even been mentioned in some circles as a possible future presidential candidate. While that would obviously be a long shot, the American people could do worse than electing Jesse Ventura as their president. God knows, they have done much worse many times in the past.

This is a truly remarkable book – one of the most brutally honest, profoundly insightful and immensely courageous ever written by anyone who has held high elective office. Jesse Ventura is absolutely right: far too much of what governments and media tell us today is, indeed, “just a pile of bullcrap.”

Gordon Pollard is a native of Victoria, and has taught English and History.



Mark your Calendars
..... for the Gathering on the Green !!

A sub-committee of the Committee for Ending Homelessness in Victoria was awarded a grant from VIPIRG, and they want to hear from YOU !

They will be creating a video on the subject of poor-bashing and the state of police/ security/authority in Victoria. Do you want to tell your story or share your opinion? Please contact us at 778-430-2454, attend a committee meeting (every Wednesday evening at the Silver Threads office on Douglas St at 7:00 pm), or show up at the

Gathering on the Green - August 22nd.

Yes indeed, on August 22nd Pandora Street will come alive with acoustic music, information tables, a children’s stage, food, and a speaker’s corner booth where folks can share their stories (anonymously, if preferred).

Everyone, from all socio-economic communities, is welcome to participate or to volunteer and help organize this event. Email:

A Citizen Speaks to City Council

This could look like a contest
where the voices
that are the loudest
or in the greatest number
or the most dramatic
will carry the argument.
Not so.
There is no argument.
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of international repute.
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although that too but testified a cold statistic
in a city no better or worse off than this,
just one that willed a different outcome
some years earlier than us.

And we have not come
to tell you why.
For you know why, and paid
for researchers to tell you why
in charts and graphs
so many deaths ago
It might be said that no one knows just how
to put a safe injection site in place,
but all that expertise
from other jurisdictions can be had:
Who owns the buildings sitting blank?
Who ran the one you closed two years ago?
What skills, compassion, strength of will
cannot be found right in this chamber here?
The only question left of consequence
that we write large
across each doorway barred
by our indifference,
that we might carve on each
grave marker we condone
is “when?”

Derek Peach



The Early Songbird

When night fall shifts to dawn the calm stillness changes to a symphony of birdsongs. A simple stroll through a residential street turns into a melodious song bird fest complete with families of birds nestled in the trees sweetly singing.

One particular songbird, a tiny sparrow, seated conspicuously on a rooftop sings splendidly above the rest as he puffs and swells his little chest with every note. He [or She] is the Divo in his very own area as he sings floridly from his heart with his own beautiful sound that gives your day a fresh new start. Does this heavenly furball on wings know the joy he gives the world and its people and their cares unfurled? Perhaps the Holy Deo has taken compassion on this world by easing the cares and suffering by giving us these heavenly birds of song.

His tiny innocent face looks on as he carries on his melodious message throughout the sleepy and awakening neighbourhood. Other songbirds join with this wise messenger in a glorious symphony of praise.

On on occasion I look up to thank him for the joy he brings, and my little friend with a startled look suddenly flies away. A rascal cat hiding in the bushes is maybe the reason. As precise as clockwork this heavenly messenger will be perched high on a pole, rooftop or tree to sing exclusively for me and others as his very own audience to hear and see.

My very own special friend, the early songbird.

© Mark Idczak



Recipe for 50’s Joy Joy

Make friends with change
Embrace eternal strange
Free your inner outre rage
Converse with daily over clouds
Avoid fat politicians journalists
Let the rain massage your very mind
Tired from worry games or blind hate
Let the drops contain your own kind.
All in all, let life in, don’t shut her out
Learn to talk to crow wind and trout
More to be learned from golden surprises
Than texts computer or guys/gals Wises!

John alan Douglas

NO EXIT © Andy Singer

SINCE 2001, THERE’VE BEEN 858 FIRES AND EXPLOSIONS ON GULF OIL RIGS, WITH 69 DEATHS, 1349 INJURIES AND NUMEROUS SMALL SPILLS. (FEDERAL MINERALS MANAGEMENT)



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Thanks! to Alison, Gordon, Kelly, Nora, Marge & Harry, the Victoria Human Exchange SSI Branch, Joan, Ken, Michael, Elizabeth Fry Society, the UVSS, Moe and the Panhandlers, and NASNA, for their donations to help send Rose to the North America Street Newspaper Conference in Chicago late July. We've covered \$860 of our \$1250 expenses so far!

May money from the sale of this newspaper be used for peace, and pass through healing hands.

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Calendar Sales	385.00	0.00	0.00
Donations	1330.00	180.00	198.00
Gifts (incl in-kind)	85.00	60.00	200.00
Co-ordinator's Contribution	77.84	219.79	190.34
Subscriptions	55.00	55.00	0.00
Bread & Roses Donation to SNZ	800.00	800.00	800.00
Total Street Newz Revenue	3165.34	1633.79	1708.34
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Vendor Meeting	0.00	30.00	0.00
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Street Newz	1855.00	295.00	398.00
Bread & Roses Revenue			
Grants (hurray!)	0.00	10000.00	0.00
Total Bread & Roses Revenue	0.00	0.00	0.00
Bread & Roses Expenses			
Bus Tickets (2 for 1)	40.50	45.00	40.50
Street Newz Donation	800.00	800.00	800.00
Ttl Bread & Roses Expenses	840.50	845.00	840.50
Bread & Roses	-840.50	9155.00	-840.50
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